CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

TI FORUM

by Barry Traver and Jonathan Zittrain

One encouraging development in the TI world is the increased sharing and exchange of information and programs between TIers in various countries of the world, including the Netherlands, Germany, France, England, the United States, Canada, and Australia, among others. Terry Phillips, Honorary Secretary of TISHUG (Australia) Limited, was kind enough, for example, to send me a sample copy of a recent issue of the *TISHUG New Digest* (address: P.O. Box 214, Redfern, New South Wales, Australia 2016), and I was impressed with the quality of the publication. Just as Ottawa does not have all the talent in Canada (e.g., the Toronto area has Steve Mickelson, Gary Bowser, and others), likewise the Hunter Valley group in Australia (with Tony and Will McGovern of Funnelweb fame) does not have a monopoly on Australian talent!

Almost all of the approximately thirty articles in the 31-page March 1989 *TISHUG New Digest* (all right, it's no longer the latest issue) seem to be original and thoughtfully done. Although there are a few items by Mike Dodd, Jim Peterson, and Stephen Shaw, the rest seems to be original material by TISHUG members, including Lou Amadio, Ross Mudie, Terry Phillips, Larry Saunders, Craig Sheehan, Geoff Trott, Dick Warburton, and Warren Welham.

One interesting article is "Newsletter Roundup" by Lou Amadio. Capsule summaries of other newsletters are given, both Australian (e.g., the Hunter Valley 99ers News) and "overseas" (e.g., the Ottawa TI99/4A Users Group newsletter and the L.A. 99ers TopIcs). Since some newsletters generally ignore material for children, it was good to see a section entitled "Jenny's Younger Set."

Based on material from the Texas Weekly (April 1984) and other sources, John Paine put an article together entitled "Death of a Computer," detailing the "demise" of the TI-99/4A. (The TI, however, might be tempted to repeat the words of Mark Twain in response to reading his own prematurely-printed obituary. It is reported that he said something like this: —The reports of my death are highly exaggerated."

Software/hardware articles are included, plus two complete listings for TI Extended BASIC. One software review article is the one done by Larry Saunders of Asgard's PrEditor. True, there are other user group newsletters that may be just as good (for example, the Philadelphia Area TI Users Group has come out with some very worthwhile issues recently), but I thought the *TISHUG New Digest* would be a good example to use of the sorts of things that are currently being made available in such newsletters.

If you're interested in subscribing to

the *TISHUG News Digest,* "overseas airmail dues" are given as AUS$50.00 (don't ask me how much that is in American dollars!), although your user group may be able to work out some sort of newsletter exchange arrangement instead. (You'll have to write and ask.)

Since I am very much interested in extending TI Extended BASIC with CALL LINKs, I noted with interest that the magazine contained articles by Ross Mudie (who has released three or four disks of such routines, including source code) and Craig Sheehan (author of XDP, "eXtended Display Package").

About a year ago, I did a three-month series in *Computer Shopper* on "Extended Extended BASICs." Of the nine I surveyed, six of them made use of new assembly routines accessed by a CALL LINK: Oak Tree's DEP, J & KH's SXB, Comm-Link's STAR, Paragon's EDP, Bytemaster's String Master, and my own XXB. More recently I mentioned very briefly a new such package called XDP ("eXtended Display Package"), promising to review it in more detail at a later time. Well, since one of the articles in the *TISHUG News Digest* is "Extended Display Package, Part 5" by Craig Sheehan, this seems to be a good time to do so.

I obtained my copy of the actual XDP software through Irwin Hott who obtained his copy from Jim Peterson (Tigercub Software, 156 Collingwood Avenue, Columbus, OH 43213). (As announced in a previous column, Jim is

making available public domain and authorized fairware programs essentially at cost of copying and mailing, i.e., $1.50 each for single-sided, single-density disks. Contact him for more information, perhaps sending $1.00 for his public domain catalog if your user group does not already have a copy.)

Note: please use "XDP" rather than "EDP" as the "shorthand" form for Craig's "Extended Display Package," so that there will be no confusion with the "Enhanced Display Package" by Curtis Provance of Paragon Computing (which itself should not be confused with the "Display Enhancement Package" or "DEP" of Oak Tree Systems!). All three packages are "40-column packages" for Extended BASIC, but each has its own unique features. Since I have already discussed DEP and EDP in previous columns, this may be a good time to give equal time to XDP.

In the author's own words, XDP "enhances screen handling through the use of over twenty assembly language links that provide: an additional 98 graphics characters, 2 extra character sets, the choice of either 32 or 40 column display modes, windowing of text, enhanced DISPLAY and ACCEPT functions, scrolling of graphics, the ability to plot individual pixels, plus a screen dump that operates from both modes." (The screen is intended for Epson and Epson-compatible printers.)

Here are the commands, many of

ADAM

THE ADAM FORUM

by Paul Pappas
Greetings To The Great White North

Canadian ADAM users probably noticed a decided lack of information about ADAM usage "north of the border." This was not due to a lack of interest on their part, but rather a lack of knowledge on my part. Recent letters and newsletters from Canada give me a much better view of the ADAM community there, a view I would like to share with you.

Two user groups were kind enough to send me copies of their newsletters; the ADAM User Friendly Group, 342 Nagel Ave., Orleans Ontario K1E 1R6, and Edmonton ADAM Users Group, 11720 University Ave., Edmonton Alberta, T6G 1Z5; 403-439-7808. Both AUFG and EAUG newsletters, the "AUFG Newsletter" ($25 annual) and "ADAM's Leaf" ($20 annual) respectively, are well written and informative. Two well-known ADAM Hackers, Tony Moren and Guy Cousineau are active members of AUFG. Both organizations have existed for several

years with a strong membership base and are well equipped to help ADAM Users from novice to expert.

Ron Mitchell, president of AUFG sent me a very enjoyable letter highlighting his groups activities. He included copies of letters he wrote on behalf of AUFG to Activision, American Design Components, and Telegames USA supporting further development of ADAM compatible products. The AUFG is an excellent example of the majority of and ADAM User Groups, concerned, dedicated, knowledgeable, and active! Keep up the good work, we all appreciate your efforts.

Not just user groups, but dealers sent me information as well. Dan Frazer of Electric Image, Box 890, Palmerston, Ontario, N0G 2P0, send their latest jam packed catalog listing supplies, hardware, retail and PD software, plus a few items available only from Electric City. "ADAM's Leaf" listed some other ADAM dealers, namely Hans Myer, 17 Pel Pk Gdns, Toronto Ontario M6N 1A7, and Trisyd Video Games, 26 Florence Cres, Toronto, Ontario, M6N

4E4. Some retail chains which still carry ADAM items are Princess Auto, Canadian Tire, and Micro Play, Ltd.

If you represent a Canadian (or any other countries) ADAM user group or dealer I would like to hear from you. Of special interest are newsletters and catalogs which gives me some degree of insight concerning your organization. My goal is to cover the ADAM community wherever it may be, regardless of national boundaries. Viva le ADAM!

The Envelope Please

In the March '89 issue of the NIAD Newsletter, Jim Notini listed the top ten ADAM programs from 11/16/88 through 01/27/89 based on NIAD mail order sales. Jim plans to print a new list every few months. Since neither I nor anyone else can possibly review every ADAM product, this is an excellent way to determine which products ADAM users have voted "the best" by virtue of their hard earned dollars— the envelope please.

#1) Temple of the Snow Dragon by Digital Adventures; #2) PrintWORKS

by Walters Software; #3) Speedy-WRITE V2.0 by White Co; #4) Ghost Zapper by Pitman Software; #5) File Manager V2.0 by AJM Software; #6) ADAMLink III by Tom Clary; #7) (Tie) CopyCART + 2.0 by MMSG and Sub Raiders by Strategic Software; #8) PowerPAINT by Digital Express; #9) (Tie) Clipper and Chess Champ by Digital Express; #10) Pro Golf Champ by Superior Software.

Other programs which demonstrated high sales are Mind Over ADAM by Pittman Software; SmartDSK III by Walters Software Co., Las Vegas Craps by Al Roginsky Software; Sprite-POWER by Digital Express; Clip-Art Vol 1 by Wizards Lair Software; and RamBOOT by Walters Software.

As Jim points out, it's important to remember new products have an advantage over older products which have been on the market longer. Also keep in mind this listing is based solely on NIAD sales and does indicate a personal endorsement. These items (and many others) are available from NIAD, PO Box 1317, Lisle, IL 60532; 312-961-

CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC

► THE ADAM FORUM

3529, and most other ADAM dealers.

Anticipating ADAM

Charlie Smith, possibly the "hardest working ADAM User" in the business, has located yet another company with the potential to create ADAM compatible products. Recently Charlie contacted Asgard Software, one of the largest and most respected producers of TI99/4A software, suggesting they consider adding ADAM software to their product line. Here is an excerpt of the response from Asgards General Manager, Chris Bobbit.

"Actually, we have at one time or another contemplated producing software for the ADAM. In fact, I have an ADAM sitting around—actually an MSX machine manufactured in Japan, which as you may be aware, is quite similar to the ADAM. I have watched the ADAM world on and off for years. However, I'm not sure if (a) we have

anything we could offer the ADAM community, (b) what publications and/or dealers exist, and most importantly, (c) what we'd need to get started and where to get it."

"Unfortunately, I do not know any ADAM programmers, if there are any [who are] interested in producing software for publication by us, we'd be happy to hear from them, assuming we can find out the information I mentioned earlier."

I sent Asgard information concerning ADAM user groups, publications, and dealers. If you are interested in Asgard producing new ADAM software (you are interested, aren't you?) please send Asgard a short note indicating the types of software you currently purchase and what kind of software you would like to see them produce. Those interested in programming the ADAM for profit should contact Asgard as well. Contact Chris Bobbit, c/o Asgard Soft-

ware, PO Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20850.

Developers take note. If the MSX computer is indeed similar to the ADAM it may be possible to convert MSX products to run on the ADAM, or produce ADAM/MSX products, thus increasing potential sales. At present I know nothing about the MSX but am attempting to locate relevant information on the system. If anyone has information on the MSX I would appreciate a copy.

You may wonder why Charlie and I often ask you to write letters. Simply stated, sufficient numbers of letters get the job done. Were it not for letters from ADAM Users to *Computer Shopper* magazine, "The ADAM Forum" would not exist. Letters do work! Demonstrate to a manufacturer is money to be made and a product will appear to fill the void. So splurge on

that 25 cent stamp, the computer you save may be your own.

More ADAM Dealers

In response to my listing of ADAM compatible printer ribbons, Otto Fielde of Allied Business Machines, 9281 Earl St, La Mesa, CA 92041, 619-461-6361, sent their latest catalog which lists not only ADAM printer ribbons but ADAMs, printers, ColecoVision expansion kits, disk drives, and a few other goodies. I'll save you a bit of searching by telling the ADAM products are listed on page 35 in catalog #GAC3368.

Allied Creative Engineers, PO Box 95, Clover, SC 29710, is a new company specializing in retail and PD software, with several entertainment titles of their own creation. I was intrigued (and pleased) by the opening paragraph of the catalogs introduction, written by Charlie Evans.

"Hi. Yes, we're new to the ADAM

► TI FORUM

which are enhanced replacements for similar Extended BASIC commands: ACCEPT, CHAR, CHRPAT, CLRS ("clear screen"), CLRW ("clear window"), COLOR, DISPLY, GCHAR, GETSTR ("get string," a multiple-character GCHAR), HCHAR, MODE (i.e., text or graphics), NORMAL (returns all screen handling to normal Extended BASIC commands), PLOT (high-resolution plotting routine), PLTCHR (for initializing plot routine), PRNAME (for changing printer name), SCRDMP (to activate screen dump), SCREEN, SCROLL (for window), SPRITE, SPRPAT (to redefine sprite pattern), VCHAR, WINDOW, and XDP (opposite of NORMAL).

Documentation is on disk and is carefully and professionally done. It includes general comments concerning the use of XDP and extended discussion of each command as well as five useful appendices. According to the "XDP Utility Guide," XDP "may be distributed or used in any program provided that it is on a non-commercial basis and credit is given to the author." My hope is that those who write programs utilizing XDP may follow the Craig Sheehan's excellent example and share their programs with the TI world at large.

I have the same hope, by the way, for those who may be writing programs using other extensions of Extended BASIC, i.e., DEP, SXB, STAR, EDP, String Master, and XXB. If you have written a public domain or fairware program using any of these and would like assistance in getting it out to the TI community, send a copy to Barry Traver, 835 Green Valley Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19128, and (as Sysop on two major networks) I'll be glad to see what I can do to aid in its getting out to people who can benefit from it.

If you are interested in adding your own CALL LINKs to Extended BASIC, you will be glad to know that source is not only available for XDP, but a part of the basic package! (At least that's the form in which I myself got it.) To be sure, source code is available also for some other similar packages (including SXB, STAR, and EDP), but there is ordinarily an additional cost involved, whereas source code seems to be another gift from Craig to the TI community (provided that—of course—such is not used for any commercial purpose without written permission of the author).

Although I have not used XDP extensively, I am impressed with what I have seen thus far and commend it to your attention. Another person you should know who is associated with TISHUG of Sydney, Australia is Ross Mudie, who himself has made available several disks of CALL LINKs (including assembly source code) to the TI community. I obtained three such disks from Jim Peterson, but I believe Ross may have prepared more. The ones I have contain Ross's own 40-column versions of DISPLAY and ACCEPT as well as material in areas not included in Craig Sheehan's XDP, e.g., sound and speech, so you may want to check out Ross's efforts as well. (Again, check your local user group or bulletin board for these programs, or—if that fails—you can check with Jim Peterson. If you want to get directly in touch with Ross, the only address I have for him is the TISHUG address given earlier.)

In short, thanks go to the TISHUG of Australia (including Craig Sheehan and Ross Mudie) for their contributions to the TI world and to other user groups in various countries who are keeping the TI-99/4A alive and well by sharing what they are doing with others.

We hope to keep you informed of similar efforts in future columns.

New 9600 Baud Bulletin Board

A new 9600 baud bulletin board is now up for the 99/4A, run by William Byrd of Orlando, Florida. It's called "The Lone Wolf, The Next Generation," and it operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number is (407)894-9641.

Have A TI Programmable Calculator?

If so, you will want to receive __TI PPC Notes__ from the TI Personal Programmable Calculator Club. For more information, write to TI PPC Notes, P.O. Box 1421, Largo, FL, 34649.

Home Publishing Manual Available

Harry Brashear of the Western New York 99ers as produced the *Home Publishing* manual, a book that examines the different 99/4A graphics programs, including TI Artist, Picasso, Joypaint 99, GRAPHX, and Calendar Maker 99. The book comes with a TI-Artist instance printer on diskette and a promise of two additional supplements. Even without the supplements the book is 80 pages long, and sells for $15. For more information, contact the Western New York 99ers, c/o Harry T. Brashear, 2753 Main Street, Newfane, NY, 14108. The book is $12.50 in orders of ten or more.

Grab Those RF Modulators

Radio Shack is rumored to be finally running low on RF modulators compatible with the 99/4A. The RF modulator connects a standard 99/4A to a television set, and is one of the more common sources of problems. It might be a good time to stock up on a few extras as replacements (they run from $5 to $8 each).

John Guion and Robert Jones have come up with something that may be

helpful for those without one of Millers Graphics' old GRAM KRACKERs. It is called the P-GRAM card, and is designed for use with the TI Peripheral Expansion Box. The card is a GROM emulator that can save and run modules (and is compatible with the GRAM KRACKER). The package includes fully documents source code on disk and a very comprehensive user manual that guides the building of the kit.

The card includes 72K of battery-backed RAM memory, 40K GRAM for GROM emulating, and 16K each of DSR and module RAM bank-switched. GROMs 0, 1, and 2 can be viewed but not modified. An optional clock can be included.

The price for the package is $150 unassembled or $180 assembled, tested, warranted for six months, and ready to run. The clock is an additional $20.

For more information write to Bud Mills Services, 166 Dartmouth Drive, Toledo, OH, 43614.

And while we've mentioned Bud Mills Services, it might be a good time to give a pitch for the Horizon 3000 RAMdisk. While hard disk prices are quickly making the Myarc HFDC a competitive product next to the RAMdisk, it is still worth a look. The cards vary in price from $100 with zero K installed to $810 for one megabyte of memory. As browsing *Computer Shopper* shows, time of year may also make a difference, since memory prices vary! Contact Bud Mills Services for more information, or call up the TI-COMM electronic bulletin board at (419)-385-7484 (300/1200 baud).

TI-COMM not only supports Horizon users, but offers latest versions of RAMdisk software for downloading. The voice number for Bud Mills Services is (419)385-5946. ●